

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**Lead-Deadwood School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2001-2002**

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This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Office of Special Education. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Maintenance	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that if not addressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable to the district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision

General supervision means the school district's or agencies administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district in private schools or facilities, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? State data table on drop out rate
- ? Suspension/expulsion data
- ? IEP Objectives
- ? Staff surveys
- ? Private school information
- ? Comprehensive plan

- ? Student file reviews
- ? LEA request for funds

Promising practice

The districts 0% dropout rate and student assistance from teachers were cited as promising practices by the steering committee.

Maintenance

The steering committee determined areas of maintenance in their self-assessment to be that the school district has had no expulsions or long-term suspensions for the past year; the district continues to develop its curriculum to align with state standards; the goals and objectives for special education students align with the general curriculum and functional standards; and the district employs an adequate number of personnel who are appropriately supervised/certified to work with children with disabilities.

Needs Improvement

Based upon their self-assessment, the steering committee determined areas requiring improvement are to increase screening activities for children ages birth through 5 years, develop better referral procedures for private and public agencies, train paraprofessionals in the area of special education procedures and strategies, improve documentation of short-term suspensions for students with disabilities, increase involvement of students with disabilities in advisory groups, provide opportunity for parents to attend appropriate training programs, and increase staff time to complete necessary tasks.

Validation Results

Maintenance

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of maintenance for general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

Areas that need improvement

The monitoring team agrees with all areas in need of improvement for general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

Areas out of compliance

24:05:17:03. Annual report of children served.

The review team was unable to verify that services were provided to 1 student listed on the district's 2000-2001 child count. Interview also confirmed there was not an IEP in effect on December 1 of 2000 for this student.

24:05:24:01. Referral

The review team was able to validate the steering committee's conclusion that all referrals are not documented. In 8 of 12 elementary files reviewed by the team, there was no evidence of a written referral for special education services.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child

reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Parent surveys
- ? Staff surveys
- ? Student file reviews
- ? Numbers of children screened
- ? Number of referrals for evaluation
- ? Placement data
- ? Newspaper articles

Promising practice

Student accessing the same general curriculum as non-disabled students and students included in classes with other students their own age were cited as areas of promising practice by the steering committee.

Maintenance

The steering committee determined areas of maintenance in their self-assessment to be that the school district has increased its screening for children age birth through 5 years to twice per year, and the district coordinates services with the BHSSC Birth through 3 Connections Program.

Needs Improvement

The steering committee determined areas requiring improvement, based upon their self-assessment, are to increase the number of screenings per year for children birth through five years old, develop a feedback process from students and former students, develop a process for documenting and tracking suspensions/expulsions, increase communication among administrators when suspending/expelling students and to increase screening of frequently suspended students.

Validation Results

Promising practice

The district responds to the general curriculum needs of each student when they receive an in-school suspension for breaking a district rule of conduct. Students assigned to in-school suspension are sent to the "Student Assistance Center". Each of the student's teachers is notified to provide class work and assignments for the student. The district has employed an individual to supervise the center and respond to the student needs. Teachers will visit their students once a day to monitor their work. Students are allowed to participate in general curriculum activities that are provided only on that certain day. Related services are provided to students with disabilities. The system allows for student to access all aspects of the general curriculum even though they are in a disciplinary situation.

Black Hill Family Support staff is made available to family members who have a child with developmental disabilities. They assist family members to understand the IEP process and services to be provided to their children. The district also makes available to families, advocates from Western Resources.

Maintenance

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of maintenance identified for free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.

Areas that need improvement

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as needing improvement for general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

The team would like to clarify the issue regarding the need to increase screening of frequently suspended students. The steering committee identified a need to develop a process in which the names of students who are frequently sent to in-school suspension would be provided to the director of special education. These students would then undergo a pre-referral screening to determine if a potential disability exists and if the behavior is impacting classroom achievement. Based upon the information gathered as part of the pre-referral process, a referral to special education/evaluation may be initiated. The team agrees this would be an area the district may want to address in the future.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Parent surveys
- ? Eligibility data
- ? Teacher file reviews
- ? Personnel data
- ? Comprehensive plan

Maintenance

Based upon the data reviewed, the steering committee concluded that the district uses appropriate evaluations when evaluating and reevaluating for disability and eligibility determination. The district employs the services of qualified evaluators, and the district staff evaluates in all areas of suspected disability. Written notice and consent have the required components and that the district utilizes appropriate evaluation instruments.

Needs Improvement

Based upon their self-assessment, the steering committee determined an area requiring improvement was that not all parents receive a copy of evaluation results. Additional information regarding this issue is included in the validation results.

Validation Results

Maintenance

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of maintenance identified under appropriate evaluation as concluded by the steering committee.

Areas out of compliance:24:05:25:04 Evaluation procedures

Through interviews, the monitoring team found the district to be unfamiliar with the functional assessment requirement. District staff did not include functional information in the evaluation process or understand that this information was to be used for determining specific skills areas affected by the student's disability, the student's present levels of academic performance, their progress in the general curriculum or development of annual goals and short term instructional objectives. Functional assessment information is available through a variety of sources in the district, however, there is not an established process for collecting, anglicizing, summarizing or integrating the information into the 25 day evaluation process or the student's IEP.

24:05:25:04.03. Determination of eligibility

Upon completing the administration of tests and other evaluation materials, the individual education program team and other individuals required shall determine whether the student is a student with a disability. The school district shall provide a copy of the evaluation report and the documentation of determination of eligibility to the parent. The team reviewed 6 files that contained the protocols for standardized testing but did not contain a written analysis of the results. Without a written analysis of standardized and functional evaluation the district was unable to provide a copy of the evaluation report to the parents and there was no way to determine if the present levels of performance were linked to the evaluation.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used-

- ? Teacher file reviews
- ? Surveys
- ? Comprehensive plan
- ? Parental rights document
- ? Consent and prior notice forms
- ? FERPA disclosure statement
- ? Access logs
- ? Complaint and hearing data
- ? Parent surveys

Promising practice

Not having a request for a due process hearing or a complaint filed with Office of Special Education was cited as an area of promising practice by the steering committee.

Maintenance

The self-assessment summary concluded, based on data reviewed, areas of maintenance are that parents are informed of their parental rights, the parental right pamphlet contains all of the required components,

the district provides written notice at appropriate times and within required time frames, and the district publishes a FERPA notice annually in the local newspaper.

Needs Improvement

The steering committee determined an area requiring improvement, based upon their self-assessment, was that district personnel need additional in-service on the transfer of rights to students at age 18.

Validation Results

Promising practices

A power point presentation of parental right/procedural safeguards has been developed by an elementary teacher and made available to families over the district web site. This information is provided to families in addition to the written procedural safeguards document. It is written in a more “parent friendly” manner and helps families understand the procedural safeguards available to them and their child.

Maintenance

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of maintenance identified under procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee.

Areas that need improvement

Additional information regarding the transfer of rights at age 18 will be discussed under the out of compliance category.

Areas out of compliance

24:05:27:01.03. Content of individualized education program

Beginning at least one year before a student reaches the age of majority, the student's individualized education program must include a statement that the student has been informed of his or her rights under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, if any, that will transfer to the student on reaching the age of majority. Through interview, district staff stated they were not aware of the “one year before” component of this requirement. Students were informed of their rights at the IEP meeting held prior to their 14th birthday, however, in two files reviewed this was not one year before they reached the age of majority.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used –

- ? Teacher file reviews
- ? Student progress data
- ? Personnel development information
- ? Monitoring information
- ? Parent surveys

- ? Teacher surveys
- ? District placement data

Promising practice

Teachers working and planning together for the success of the students, program modifications for children when needed, communication between staff involved in the education of students with disabilities, parents feeling comfortable to ask questions at their child's IEP meeting, parents feeling their child has made gains in his or her school work, children feeling they get to learn the same things as other kids in their classes and getting to participate in extra-curricular activities with their non-disabled peers were cited as areas of promising practice by the steering committee.

Maintenance

Based on data reviewed, the self-assessment summary concluded areas of maintenance are that the district IEPs have all of the required components, placement is determined appropriately and that IEPs are reviewed and revised at least annually.

Areas that need improvement

Based upon their self-assessment, the steering committee determined areas requiring improvement were that not all parents are receiving progress reports, a system of measuring student growth from year to year needs to be developed, students are not always invited to their IEP meetings, students may not be making gains in their school work, and parents feel they need to be better informed about transition planning.

Validation Results

Promising practice

The district utilizes the Power School Program, which is a computerized system to maintain individualized student data on the internet. Information contained within the students profile includes daily class assignments, test grades, class grades etc. This information is pass code protected and can be accessed anytime by the student's teachers, the students and the student's parents.

Maintenance

The monitoring team agrees with the areas of maintenance identified under IEP content as concluded by the steering committee. Additional information regarding IEP content is provided under areas out of compliance.

Areas that need improvement

The monitoring team agrees with all areas in need of improvement identified under individualized education program as concluded by the steering committee.

Areas out of compliance

24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program

A student's IEP must contain present levels of performance based upon the skill areas affected by the students identified disability. The present levels of performance are based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process. In 14 files reviewed, present levels of performance were not linked to evaluation and did not contain the student's academic strengths, needs or their involvement in the general curriculum. In addition, the student's annual goals were written directly from the districts content standards therefore did not represent what the student could accomplish within a 12-month period and were not written in measurable or observable terms. For example, "...will write effectively for different audiences and specific purposes on all appropriate assignments". Through interview, district staff stated they were selecting the content standard for the student's annual goal and

developing short-term objectives rather than basing the annual goals on functional assessment and present levels of performance.

The IEP must describe individual modifications needed by the student, the anticipated frequency, location, and duration of those modifications. Fourteen IEPs reviewed by the team did not describe the frequency, location or duration of the needed modifications. Two IEPs included statements such as “as needed” or “when needed”. In determining what modifications would be needed for state/district wide assessments, the IEP contain a generic statement informing the reader to “refer to the modifications listed above”. The IEPs did not specify which of the listed modifications the student would need during the administration of state or district wide assessments.

Beginning at age 14 or younger, the students program must include a statement of transition service that focuses on the student's course of study such as participation in advanced-placement courses or a vocational education program. In three files reviewed the course of study was not developed for the student through 12th grade. For example, a 14-year-old had courses identified for the 8th and 9th grades but not grades 10 through 12. Through interview, the special educator was not aware the course of study was to be developed for all grade levels.

24:05:25:26. Extended school year authorized

Through interview, district staff stated they did not collect data to support or refute the need for extended year services by a student. The district might provide physical therapy or counseling service to a student during the summer but does not identify it as extended school year services. Interviews also suggested a lack of understanding between “summer school” and “extended school year” service. Four IEPs reviewed stated extended school year services were needed however the length of the school day and duration of extended school year services based on the individual child's needs was not addressed.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions; consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used –

- ? Teacher file reviews
- ? Student progress data
- ? State data tables
- ? Survey information
- ? General curriculum information

Promising practice

Employing sufficient staff to successfully facilitate inclusion, having a higher percentage of inclusion than the state average, students participate in extracurricular activities, parent awareness that their child is included in general education activities, student awareness of their inclusion in general education classes, and the staff being aware that students with disabilities are included in school activities were cited as areas of promising practice by the steering committee.

Maintenance

Based on data reviewed, the self-assessment summary concluded areas of maintenance are the district's philosophy that children with disabilities should be educated with their non-disabled peers to the maximum amount appropriate and the districts belief that special education is a service and not a place.

Areas in need of improvement

Based upon their self-assessment, the steering committee determined an area requiring improvement is that teachers and staff need more time for planning and collaborating to meet student needs.

Validation Results**Promising practice**

The district is in the process of implementing a multi-year teaching structure called looping. Looping develops a long-term relationship between teacher and child. In this multi-year structure, the teacher teaches a first grade class, for example, then follows her students to second grade, while the second grade teacher moves to first grade and picks up a new class.

The district has implemented a system that promotes the inclusion of student with disabilities in the regular classroom. Special educators and paraprofessionals are scheduled into regular education language arts and math classrooms on an alternating basis to assist student with disabilities to participate in the general curriculum. Regular education staff supported the district philosophy on inclusion. The provision of sufficient staff, scheduling system and district philosophy has resulted in an 81+ % inclusion rate for students with disabilities.

Maintenance

The monitoring team agrees with all areas of maintenance identified under least restrictive environment as concluded by the steering committee.

Areas that need improvement

The monitoring team agrees with all areas in need of improvement identified under least restrictive environment as concluded by the steering committee.